nature net

The NatureKenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org July 05

Camping at Laikipia

(Organised by the Herpetofauna Working Group and Youth Group)

Trip to Bobong Camp
29 -31 July 2005

** *You can stay on one more day for a meeting with the Laikipia Wildlife Forum on **1st August (rt 2nd Aug)**.*

All you need to bring for this trip include Gum/ rubber baots, tarches, a sleeping bag, camfartable clothing (you do not have to bring a tent) and you are also advised to carry a cup, plate and a spoon.

Trip Registration is Ksh 200. Cost 1800/- per person includes transport, food and camping fees. Baak at Nature Kenya frant affice by 15 July 05.

* For inquiries contact Beryl Okoth at the Dept. of Herpetology, Nairobi Museum, tel 3742161 - 4 ext 244/ 245 or email bebwong@yahoo.com

IN THE FIELD

Field trip to

SAGANA POWER STATION

Sat. 23 July 05

Baak with Nature Kenya *by Wednesday 20 July* It would be very much appreciated, if you have a vehicle and can offer rides to the car pool.

Meet at the Museum car park **at 7:45 a.m.** for prompt departure at 8:00 a.m. Bring a picnic lunch and water.

Cost: 200/- per person & 100/- per child

Waterbird Count

30 — 31 July 05

The mid-year waterbird count is scheduled to take place at Lake Nakuru. The count registration forms are being sent out to volunteers. Any offer to provide transport will be appreciated.

For more information contact: Alfred Owino or Martin Mwema - Department of Ornithology, tel: 3742161- 4

TALKS & VIDEOS

A Kenya Museum Society lecture

"Between cultural nostalgia and cultural amnesia: Museums and Africa's Memory"

By Prof. Mazrui

Wed 20 July 05, at Louis Leakey Hall Nairobi Museum at 6.30 p.m.

Prof Mazrui is an International Scholar on African studies and an author of more than twenty books.

Bird Hotline
3749957

African Golden Weaver *Windsor Golf & Country Club, Nairobi / May* Wednesday Morning Birdwalk

Tacazze Sunbird *L. Naivasha/ May* George McKnight

JULY AT A GLIMPSE

Sat 2	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Sat 9	Tree Walk
Sun 17	Sunday Birdwalk
Wed 20	Talk by Prof. Mazrui
Sat 23	Sagana Field trip
Mon 25	Tree Walk
Fri 29 - 31	Camping at Bobang
Sat 30 - 31	Waterbird Counts

Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning

Bird ringing every Thursday Morning

Editorial Team

Editar Catherine Ngarachu

Evening Skies Fleur Ng'weno

Naturalist's Corner Dino Martins

Snap Shots

City Park MOU signed

between the City Council of Nairobi, National Museums of Kenya and Nature Kenya

Left to right Nairobi Mayor Councillor Dick Wathika Minister of Local Govt Honourable Musikari Kombo & Chairman Nature Kenya Dr. Gordon. Also present were National Museums of Kenya Director-General Dr Idle Farah and Town Clerk John Gakuo

An important milestone was achieved with the signing of the Memarandum af Understanding on Friday 17 June 05. The MOU provides a framewark far the Friends of City Park *(a Nature Kenya project)* and the Natianal Museums af Kenya to contribute ta the governance and development af City Park

If you are interested in this initiative, please register as a Friend of City Park by sending a nate ta office@naturekenya.arg

action

PLANTING TUSSOCK GRASS at Kinangop

Youth Committee members went to Nature Kenya's Kinangop Reserve to make it habitable far its intended residents - Sharpe's Longclaw. The Reserve is intended to serve as a demonstration plot for the conservatian of this bird and ather species.

The main activity was transplanting tussock grass on the formerly cultivated land. It was a very tedious activity, but the participants were very determined and they planted a good size portion.

The birds were very excited and were even seen perching on the newly planted tussocks. The most excited was the Long-tailed Widowbird. This was a good indication that the activity was much appreciated.

Located just off the escarpment, the Reserve stands in an area with a perfect view of the Aberdares Range and within a few metres from breathtaking views of the Great Rift Valley. There is a great potential for ecotourism, involving the local Site Support Group Friends of Kinangop Plateau (FoKP).

Make sure you visit this grassland area to get a firsthand experience!

IN THE NEWS

Ivory-billed Woodpecker found in Arkansas

The Ivory-billed Woadpecker *Campephilus principalis*, one of the largest and most spectacular of the world's woodpeckers, has been rediscovered in North America. Both sexes are striking black-and-white birds, and males have flaming red crests.

The news, the subject of an announcement by the journal *Science*, has stunned ornithalogists warld-wide, as the species was widely assumed to have gone extinct in North America since the last confirmed sighting in 1944.

For more on this exciting news go to www.birdlife.net/news

Mzee &Owen...

In December last year a baby hippo was rescued from the Indian Ocean just after the tsunami, that devastated coastal regions of Asia, reached Kenyan shores. The rescued baby hippo was taken to Haller Park in Mombasa.

While settling down there and being cared for, something happened that surprised everybody - the baby hippo, named Owen, 'adopted' a Giant Aldabran Tortoise as a foster parent. Owen and Mzee farmed an inseparable bond and the pictures of them were seen around the world after the BBC aired their story.

This amazing story inspired several people to write a book about them. The book was launched as an e-book earlier this year in New York. The story of Owen and Mzee is available free for download from the website of Lafarge EcoSystems: www.lafargeecosystems.com

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The Kitengela Bird House

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EVENING SKY

Moon

July 6th New moon; July 14th First quarter, July 21st Full moon; July 28th Last quarter

Other Times

July 7th - Saturn is 4.6 degrees south of the moon;
July 8th - In the early evening Mercury is just south of the moon and Venus is even closer to the moon;
July 13th - Jupiter north of the moon;
July 27th - Mars is just south of the moon;
July 29th - Southern delta Aquorid meteor shower is at maximum;
July 30th - Alpho Capricornid meteor shower is ot maximum;

Stars

The M5 Globular Cluster is directly overhead this month. To find it, look for the outline of the Scorpion like a giant fishhook high in the southern sky. Draw an imaginary line from the Scorpion's reddish star Antares to the bright orange-yellow star Arcturus high in the north. M5 is about halfway on this imaginary line. With binoculars, you can see the glow of the globular cluster.

Globular clusters are groups of stars relatively close to each other. These clusters are scattered thoughout galaxies, including our own. They are thought to contain hundreds to hundreds of thousands of closely packed, older stars. Objects like these also help to give us an idea of the scale of things out there. Almost all we can see from earth without telescopes is part of our own galaxy we coll the Milky Way, which is about 100,000 light years across.

On a dark, clear night we see the Milky Way as a wide pale ribbon across the sky. It passes through the constellations of Sagittarius (shaped like a teopot) and Scorpius (shaped like a fishhook), to the brilliant stars of the Centaur and the Southern Cross in the south.

Planets

Brilliant Venus is low in the western sky, setting a little later each night. Saturn is lower than Venus, and disappears in the glare of the sun by mid-month. The tiny planet Mercury is relatively high in the sky throughout July. The crescent moon will be nearby in the second week of July.

Bright Jupiter is high overhead at sunset, and reddish Mars is visible for more than half the night.

Meteor Showers

At certain times of the year the Earth passes through areas of the solar system containing bits of rock and dust. When these objects enter the Earth's atmosphere, they burn up, and look like "shooting stars" or "burning spears". Look for meteors in the last weekend of July!

LURED BY SCENT

Dino Martins
email dinom@elci.org

A strong, sweet scent wafts gently through the evening air. Powerfully sweet and musky all at once, it emanotes from a large but innocuous-looking plant. The plant bears large dazzlingly white flowers that unfurl their petals in the evening and flood the oir around them with an intoxicating perfume. The scent is so strong that even people, with our relative poor sense of smell, can be easily overwhelmed by it if the flowers are brought into a closed room or planted near a window.

Out of the gathering dusk a whirring form whistles past the flowers. It sweeps around and around, then hovers in front of a blossom with its long tongue uncoiled. This is a hawkmoth, and it is feeding on nectar from the flowers. White flowers with tubular forms, scent and nectar that open at night are typically hawkmoth-pollinated. Not just moths, but dozens of Chafer beetles too, are drawn to the flowers as the scent spreads through the air. Drugged by the narcotic perfume, they crawl clumsily on the flowers, chewing the petals. This plant, common across East Africa, is widely known as the Thornapple or Datura (*Datura stramonium*). A common weedy plant of disturbed areas such as roadside verges and old bomas, Datura is fast-growing and tenacious.

It is thought to originate in the Americas, probably in the South-western US or Mexico. It has become naturalised in Kenya and many other tropical regions of the world.

This plant has been widely used in traditional medicine despite the fact that it is highly poisonous and must be used with the greatest caution. It is used in the treatment of worms and externally the crushed fruits can be applied to the scalp against dandruff. The leaves and stem exude a strong smell when crushed. It is known to act as a narcotic and

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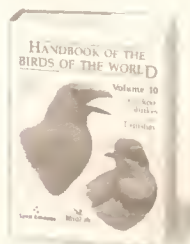

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Up & about

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to praperty.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Thase wha are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.*

Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders are a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday of the month. For further details call 057 42952 or 0734 994938 or email lakevictoriasunsetbirders@yahoo.co.uk

Mt Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group (MKBCG)

The MKBCG is a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and organise bird walks to sites around Naro Moru every last Saturday o the month **i.e. 30 July.**
For more information contact 0722 364904, 0733 937115 or 062 62071 Email: mt_kebio@yahoo.co.uk

TREE WALKS

Guided tree walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. **9 & 25 July from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the Arboretum gate. *Thase who are nat members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.*

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 17 July**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

Organised by the Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust, nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. **2 & 16 July, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse. Call Anthony Chalo to confirm on 575207 or 0733 712406.

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **2 July, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees now apply (100/- Citizens, 500/- Residents)

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, i.e. **16 July.** Please call Marlene Reid on (041) 491 648 to confirm

Plan your weekend or other break to stay at the
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For more information, brochure and non-member rates please contact Nature Kenya.

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